A Window Into My Soul ADDENDUM

AN ESSAY BY

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A Window Into My Soul ADDENDUM

I wrote *A Window Into My Soul* from a conservative Catholic perspective as I held most of my life. I'm now (older), more progressive and write this addendum to update my thoughts on several essays in the book.

This book is a collection of essays that I wrote over a twenty-year period, each one independent from the others, written as inspiration led me at the time. What to do with 100 essays that no one else sees? Assemble and organize them into a book? Why not? And I had the support of a good Catholic editor to help complete the process. I self-published it in 2016.

Subsequently, I continued to write about my faith but in a more organized approach and completed another book, *Life AFTER Death – Choices and Consequences* in 2025. That process included a lot of reading from Catholic sources but also many other books, videos and online research. And my thinking became more critical, trying to get the bigger picture with the intent to be as objectively truthful as I could. That led me to reconsider some of my conservative Catholic thinking.

If a person is raised Catholic, faith formation begins at baptism, continues as an infant through their parents practice of their faith, begins more formally in pre-school classes and continues in some form through elementary, middle and high school, if you follow that pathway. It includes a pretty strict moral code based on the Ten Commandments and as further developed in Catholic teaching. Do this and mostly, don't do that. "Thou shalt not _____." Thoughts, words and deeds are all examined under moral standards. Examine your conscience each day and go to confession regularly. "Father, forgive me for I have sinned."

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) is a very complete statement about Catholic teaching and includes some strict moral standards. Catholic teaching is also relatively exclusive and judgmental. And that can be hurtful when directly conveyed, as I learned around age 12 but I didn't have a better understanding then. Some of that thinking is reflected in *A Window Into My Soul*, particularly the chapter on *Morality*, and I apologize for any hurt that may cause.

The Church holds that its teachings are infallible on matters of faith and morals, i.e., it cannot be mistaken. CCC glossary states that: *The gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church whereby the pastors of the Church, the pope and bishops in union with him, can definitively proclaim a doctrine of faith or morals for the belief of the faithful. This gift is related to* ***the inability of the whole body of the faithful to err in matters of faith and morals****.* (my emphasis)

CCC 890 says: *To fulfill this service,* ***Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals****.*

To most Catholics, that's a given. The Church's teaching has to be right because God said so. Pretty hard to disagree. So, what do you do if you believe that some of the Church's teachings are not true? Many just walk away from the Church. But, if you want to write the truth about your faith, you have to dig deeper and maybe study other resources with an open mind. That's what I'm trying to do with the goal of writing the truth as best I can understand it.

Or another example, the Bible is the "word of God." In the introduction to my Catholic Bible, it says, *"Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. --- because, ---* ***they have God as their author*** *---. --- it follows that* ***the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted to put into the sacred writings*** *for the sake of our salvation.* It then goes on to acknowledge that God speaks through men in human fashion, --- *among other things, --- 'literary forms."* That allows for some interpretation but then goes on to say that the only one authorized to make that interpretation is the Church.

In the instructions of *How to read your Bible*, it describes the difference between 'inspiration' by God and 'revelation' by God. *Sometimes inspired searching for meaning leads to conclusions which cannot be qualified as revelation from God.* Again, that allows for some understanding not to take every word literally, but figuratively.

Some of the Ten Commandments are widely understood and accepted by society in general, e.g., *"Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not steal."* But the one that says, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery,"* forms the basis for the Church's long and strict teachings about sexual morality which are widely challenged and violated. That's the line that I was following in essays about *Sexual Morality* and *The Moral Code – the Case Against Sexual Misconduct,* a strict following of the Church's teachings on sexual morality. That, of course, prohibits all sexual thoughts, words and deeds outside of the legitimate marriage union between a man and a woman. Period. No exceptions. And that's what I stated in the book.

But when developing *Life AFTER Death*, I wrote the following:

In my own 2016 book, A Window Into My Soul, I repeated that strict conservative viewpoint. I've since changed my mind and belief somewhat because it absolutely prohibits all LGBTQI+ sexual activity, period! They are strictly not allowed to express that natural sexual response under any circumstances. When challenged, the Church's reply is strict chastity or celibacy, simply no sex. That's unrealistic. I believe that the millions of people who don't fit under the strict Judeo-Christian restrictions about sex are also created by God and given the same rights and privileges that we enjoy, within some reasonable boundaries. But the boundaries are only established by religions. And the conservative Church has made it very clear that there are no exceptions to that rule.

Similarly, the United Methodist Church has recently broken apart (schism) or 'realigned' into two separate organizations – one more liberal with regard to acceptance of LGBTQI+ individuals as well as moderately pro-choice on abortion and one more conservative that clearly does not accept LGBTQI+ or abortion. See an article by Robert Allan Hill published on MSNBC media, December 31, 2023 entitled: The Bible verse proving anti-LGBTQ Methodists have not truly read the Bible.

Pope Francis recently said that the Church welcomes LGBTQI+ people. At the recent (2023) World Youth Day conference in Portugal, they chanted with Pope Francis: "Todos, Todos, Todos" (Everyone, Everyone, Everyone). So, yes, the Church welcomes everyone, including LGBTQI+. But Pope Francis then clarified that every organization

has rules, and 'everyone' must follow those rules if they want to participate in the Church. The rules are basically what I said above: no sex outside of legal bisexual marriage. No Gay sex. No Lesbian sex. No Bisexual or Trans or Queer sex. No Gay marriage (but maybe civil unions). No openly Gay sex for Church employees. No health care related services for trans children or adults in Catholic hospitals.

Another 'revealed' moral law also has to do with sexual identity. Conservatives (and the Church) rely on the statement in Genesis 1:27 – "God created man in his image, in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them." That is taken literally that there are only two legitimate sexual identities – male and female; strictly binary, only one or the other, no exceptions, period.

Those teachings are based on the Scriptures and 2,000-year-old theology and have been reaffirmed throughout the Church's history. They are 'tradition' that many hold sacred and not subject to otherwise consideration. They do not take into account current scientific knowledge about the reality of physical and psychological sexuality that is far more complex than simple binary male/female definitions, i.e., the whole spectrum of LGBTQI+.

Expanding that complexity is the natural reality (objective truth) of intersex beings in both the animal kingdom and in humans. I first came across this in Darwin's The Origin of Species where he talked about 'hermaphrodites' in the animal kingdom (he didn't address the human world). We now know that characteristic, intersex, also applies to humans having been born with a spectrum of physical sexual attributes of both male and female; far broader variations than the traditional (conservative) binary definition. A small yet significant segment of our human society, reported to be 1.7%, has intersex characteristics at birth. Don't take my word for it; look it up to verify if you wish.

A person being naturally born intersex is not a moral issue, either on their own or of their parents – it's entirely natural, whether a God-intended condition or a result of the natural reproductive and genetic processes created by God. The moral issue arises within the conservative religions about when/how they practice their varied sexuality. It seems the real moral issue is not 'being' intersex but how they are treated by 'Christians' who deny their legitimate existence and legislate to prevent their appropriate medical care and life choices.

Unfortunately, many LGBTQI+ are suffering physical and mental abuse, discrimination and hate, and denial of fundamental human rights that the rest of us enjoy, at the hands of the traditional Church and many other conservatives. They hold ancient tradition above Jesus' own commandment to love everyone. They are like the Scribes and Pharisee's of our time.

Further, in the section, *How did we get our souls?*, I wrote:

Further, if that were objectively true, it would hold that God intentionally created LGBTQI+ people individually, each and every one. And it certainly would make them all God's children and contradict the conservative argument that 'God created them, male and female' (Genesis 1:27) as exclusively binary. But then Genesis is not objectively true. It's another example of intersubjective truth, believed by many, including the Church. LGBTQ people are a natural result of God-created diversity which is much more complicated than the simple binary male/female definition would have it.

Similarly, in *A Window Into My Soul*, I included an essay on *Abortion*, again following the strict Catholic teaching – no abortion under any circumstances.

And after further study and consideration, in *Life AFTER Death*, I wrote, *How did we get our souls*:

And the way the soul develops is very significant when we talk about abortion. What is the state of the soul of a zygote or embryo or fetus at the time of an abortion? Is it the same as a fully developed, full term baby? Or something less? The conservative point of view stated above is that the soul is infused by God at the moment of conception which is the basis for denying any and all abortions. If the soul is developed over time by natural processes, it may or may not have been formed at the time of abortion. If the soul is just potential as I state above, is it morally okay to abort? If a pregnancy is medically inviable, e.g., ectopic, does that make a difference from a moral standpoint?

As I wrote this, the headline news was that the Alabama Supreme Court had ruled that a zygote in an IVF freezer is the same as a child and has the same protections under state law, holding that damage or destruction of such zygote is liable as taking a life. In the particular case, someone accidentally destroyed a batch of frozen zygotes, and the plaintiffs wanted the IVF facility held responsible; the Court ruled in their favor.

So, to make it more complicated, is the soul of a zygote in the uterus or fallopian tube or freezer the same? Or can the doctors treat them differently from a medical or moral standpoint?

I don't think we really know the status of the soul at any point before viability outside the womb. We know that very premature babies do survive and develop into a person, so they enjoy all the moral and legal protections. We know that some or maybe many embryos will develop fatal complications and result in miscarriage at any point of pregnancy so they will never develop into a person with such rights. So, is the moral line determined at viability? The ultimate judgment is God's alone; we just can't really know. But I do believe that God will look at each case individually, what and why, the personal choice of the mother-to-be, the medical professional opinion, etc., not just a blanket black and white yes or no.

I added another whole chapter on *Soul of the unborn*, which I won't fully include here, but in my conclusion, I wrote:

But all this isn't just a philosophical discussion about the arguable status of the unborn soul; it's also about the physical and mental health care of the woman who is carrying the zygote, whether it has as soul yet or not. It's about a pregnancy that will require a great deal of medical care and place a significant mental and psychological load on a woman who may or may not want it. Does God care more about the potential life of the zygote or the very real needs of the woman? God loves every woman very much, especially mothers and mothers-to-be. To argue that God loves the zygote more is at best questionable or illogical.

As discussed under the section on Free will, the Catechism states emphatically that we must respect and support the right of free will so we should also respect and protect the right of a pregnant woman to decide what's best for herself and her family. God may

or may not agree with the woman, but he gave her the right to choose for herself and will deal with the consequences after looking at her entire life, not just her decision about her pregnancy.

To not only deny the mother-to-be's free choice in one of the most important decisions of her lifetime, but to also deny her necessary medical care for the sake of the zygote is morally wrong. The harm that is being done by conservative religious, legislative and legal leaders is more than morally wrong; it's vindictive and malicious. Especially when it comes from a sense of moral superiority.

CONCLUSION:
I am not judging whether people's thoughts, words and actions with regard to sexuality and abortion are good or bad; that's up to God. I'm not arguing that the Church's teachings are wrong. I am not arguing that society should not make just laws that prohibit and punish harmful actions. What I am arguing is that all people have the basic human right to freedom of choice to make those extraordinarily personal choices about their own sexuality, who and how they love, and whether or not to have a baby.

The Church's own written principle, CCC 1738 says:
Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. The right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters, is an inalienable requirement of the dignity of the human person. This right must be recognized and protected by civil authority within the limits of the common good and public order.

I am arguing that the Church's position to publicly condemn, humiliate and discriminate against people based on their sexuality and choice of how they want to live is harmful. I'm arguing that we should not be denying people basic human rights to healthcare that everyone else enjoys. I'm arguing that all people should be treated as brothers and sisters with respect for their rights to make very personal choices for themselves, and not to be forced to comply with our own personal religious standards.